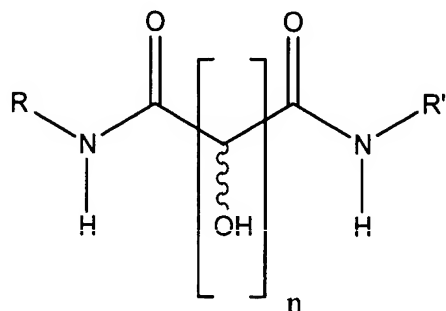


IN THE CLAIMS:

All of the pending claims 1 through 20 are presented below. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application. Please enter these claims as amended.

1. (original) A gelling agent or thickener in the form of a N,N'-disubstituted aldaramide, a N,N'-disubstituted pentaramide, or a derivative thereof.

2. (original) The gelling agent or thickener of claim 1 having the formula



wherein n is 3 or 4, and wherein R and R' represent the same or different substituents chosen from the group of substituted or unsubstituted, branched, possibly aromatic groups containing, cyclic or linear alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl groups having from 1 to 40 carbon atoms.

3. (original) The gelling agent or thickener of claim 2, wherein R and R' each represent independently a linear, branched, or cyclic alkyl group having 4-20 carbon atoms.

4. (original) The gelling agent or thickener of claim 3, wherein R and R' each are independently selected from the group of cycloalkyl groups having 4-16 carbon atoms.

5. (amended) The gelling agent or thickener of claim 2, ~~claim 3, or claim 4~~ wherein R and R' are the same.

6. (amended) The gelling agent or thickener of ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 being an N,N'-dicycloalkyl deglucaramide.

7. (original) A process for preparing a gelling agent or thickener, said process comprising:

oxidation of an aldose or pentose to form an aldaric or pentaric acid or a salt thereof, and
condensation of the aldaric or pentaric acid or a salt thereof with a primary amine of the
formula RNH_2 and a primary amine of the formula $R'NH_2$.

8. (original) The process of claim 7, wherein the aldaric or pentaric acid or salt thereof is
activated before condensation by lactonization and/or esterification.

9. (original) The process of claim 7 wherein the aldose or pentose is selected from the
group consisting of allose, altrose, glucose, mannose, gulose, idose, galactose, talose, ribose,
arabinose, xylose, lyxose, and derivatives thereof.

10. (original) The process of claim 9, wherein the derivative is a deoxy aldose or
pentose, an ether, or an ester.

11. (original) The process of claim 8 wherein the aldose or pentose is selected from the
group consisting of allose, altrose, glucose, mannose, gulose, idose, galactose, talose, ribose,
arabinose, xylose, lyxose, and derivatives thereof.

12. (original) The process of claim 11, wherein the derivative is a deoxy aldose or
pentose, an ether, or an ester.

13. (amended) A process for preparing a gel or thickening comprising:
mixing the gelling agent or thickener of ~~any one of claims 1-6~~ claim 1 with a
composition.

14. (original) The process of claim 13 wherein the composition comprises an organic
solvent.

15. (original) The process of claim 14 wherein the solvent is selected from the group
consisting of aromatic and non-aromatic hydrocarbons, alcohols, ethers, esters, aldehydes,
alkanoic acids, epoxides, amines, halogenated hydrocarbons, silicon, vegetable oils, phosphoric
esters, sulfoxides, water and mixtures thereof.

16. (amended) The process of ~~any one of claims 13-15~~ claim 13 wherein the gelling agent or thickener is mixed with the composition in a ratio of between about 0.01 and about 50% by weight.

17. (original) The process of claim 15 wherein
the mixture of the gelling agent or thickener and the composition is heated, or
wherein a solution of the gelling agent or thickener is added to or sprayed into the composition.

18. (original) The process of claim 16 wherein the mixture of the gelling agent or thickener and the composition is heated, or wherein a solution of the gelling agent or thickener is added to or sprayed into the composition.

19. (amended) A gel comprising the gelling agent or thickener of ~~any one of claims 1 to 6~~ claim 1.

20. (amended) A gel produced by the process of ~~any one of claims 13 to 18~~ claim 13.